CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	MDT Checkerboard - Martinsdale
Proposed Implementation Date:	January 2012
Proponent:	MDT
Location:	16, T9N, R10E
County:	Meagher
Trust:	Common Schools

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The scope of the project is to reconstruct the roadway to provide a 28 ft finished top width and a design speed of 55 mph. On the state trust lands the applicant requests a construction LUL for the work phase of the project and an expansion of the existing easement by 2.47 net acres.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:

Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.

Project scoping began in 1999 and public meetings were conducted by MDT in October 2005. DNRC contacted the lessee/adjacent landowner for comments in Nov. 2011. (Applications were received for this project in Oct. 2011.)

2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:

MDT has or will obtain the required “124” and “404” permits and has reviewed the project area for cultural resources, with concurrence by SHPO in May 2004. “318” authorization and “401” and “402” permits also required. See section 24 of the MDT assessment for descriptions of these.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

No Action – do not approve LUL for construction staging and do not recommend land Board approval of increased easement area.

Proposed Actions – approve a temporary LUL for construction use and staging and recommend approval of increased easement area by Land Board.

The MDT completed an environmental review for the overall project, which will be referenced as appropriate in the following sections. Additional comments and discussion of impacts specific to the actions on the trust land may be found in the following sections of this document.

III. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter “NONE” If no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:

Consider the presence of fragile, compactable or unstable soils. Identify unusual geologic features. Specify any special reclamation considerations. Identify any cumulative impacts to soils.

The added R/W areas on the state land are on stabile crop land and range land acreages with some cut slope widening on the south side. The proposed easement width would provide sufficient room for a stabile cut slope. No adverse effects are anticipated.

5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION:

Identify important surface or groundwater resources. Consider the potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality. Identify cumulative effects to water resources.

There are no natural water courses on the state land. There are some flood irrigation ditches on each side of the existing highway. MDT has negotiated with the lessee regarding impacts to these features. Given lessee consent, no adverse impacts are expected.

6. AIR QUALITY:

What pollutants or particulate would be produced? Identify air quality regulations or zones (e.g. Class I air shed) the project would influence. Identify cumulative effects to air quality.

Refer to item 8 of the MDT assessment. No permanent impacts of mitigations for air quality concerns are indicated.

7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY:

What changes would the action cause to vegetative communities? Consider rare plants or cover types that would be affected. Identify cumulative effects to vegetation.

Temporary vegetation disturbances during construction, followed by revegetation by grass seeding. MDT to be responsible for noxious weed management within any new easement area which may be approved. No adverse effects anticipated.

8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:

Consider substantial habitat values and use of the area by wildlife, birds or fish. Identify cumulative effects to fish and wildlife.

Refer to sections 12 and 17 of the MDT assessment. No measurable adverse effects to wildlife species or T & E species are anticipated. Some short term displacement during construction may occur, and areas physically occupied by the new roadway would no longer be available as habitat, however these effects are in minimal strips along the edges of an already existing highway.

9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:

Consider any federally listed threatened or endangered species or habitat identified in the project area. Determine effects to wetlands. Consider Sensitive Species or Species of special concern. Identify cumulative effects to these species and their habitat.

See comments in the previous section. No effects or no adverse effects are indicated following MDT review for T & E species.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

Identify and determine effects to historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.

A Cultural resource survey was conducted in 2003. Ten sites were recorded, site 24ME0793 (Sanford Holliday Ditch) was recorded as being on state trust land in this section. SHPO concurred that the project would have no effect to this resource. Refer to section 18 of the MDT assessment.

11. AESTHETICS:

Determine if the project is located on a prominent topographic feature, or may be visible from populated or scenic areas. What level of noise, light or visual change would be produced? Identify cumulative effects to aesthetics.

Project involves minimal changes along the existing highway corridor which would adversely affect aesthetics along the route.

12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY:

Determine the amount of limited resources the project would require. Identify other activities nearby that the project would affect. Identify cumulative effects to environmental resources.

No limited resources affected on the trust land.

13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA:

List other studies, plans or projects on this tract. Determine cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of current private, state or federal actions in the analysis area, and from future proposed state actions in the analysis area that are under MEPA review (scoped) or permitting review by any state agency.

The MDT assessment dated December 23, 2009.

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" If no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

One objective of the construction project is to improve highway conditions for improved motorist safety.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

Identify how the project would add to or alter these activities.

Minor effects from reduced agricultural and rangeland acreage on the trust land.

16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:

Estimate the number of jobs the project would create, move or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to the employment market.

No measurable effects related to the operations on the trust land.

17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:

Estimate tax revenue the project would create or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to taxes and revenue.

No effects to tax revenues, affected trust lands are tax exempt.

18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES:

Estimate increases in traffic and changes to traffic patterns. What changes would be needed to fire protection, police, schools, etc.? Identify cumulative effects of this and other projects on government services

No anticipated effects.

19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS:
List State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, and other zoning or management plans, and identify how they would affect this project.

No local plans.

20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES:
Identify any wilderness or recreational areas nearby or access routes through this tract. Determine the effects of the project on recreational potential within the tract. Identify cumulative effects to recreational and wilderness activities.

Project maintains the approaches to the state land, which is legally accessible for recreational uses.

21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:
Estimate population changes and additional housing the project would require. Identify cumulative effects to population and housing.

No changes anticipated.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:
Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

No adverse affects anticipated

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:
How would the action affect any unique quality of the area?

No affects anticipated

24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:
Estimate the return to the trust. Include appropriate economic analysis. Identify potential future uses for the analysis area other than existing management. Identify cumulative economic and social effects likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.

The DOT appraisal proposed a value of $7410.00 for the added 2.47 acres of easement. This recommendation seems appropriate. The lessee has agreed to a settlement of damages and necessary approach and fencing repairs.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	**Name:**	D.J. Bakken	**Date:**	11/22/2011
	Title:	Helena Unit Manager		

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

I have selected the alternative to approve a temporary LUL for construction use and staging and recommend approval of increased easement area by Land Board.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

Project design objectives are to improve public safety on the state highway in this location. The planned actions on the trust land are not anticipated to have any significant adverse effects directly, indirectly or cumulatively. MDT has reached agreement with the lessee for repairs and damages to the lessee's improvements.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

	EIS		More Detailed EA	x	No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	**Name:**	Gavin Anderson
	Title:	CLO Forest & Lands Program Manager
Signature: 	**Date**:	11/22/2011